

Summary for the Humboldt Wind Energy Area Environmental Assessment Scoping Comment Period October 2021

Background:

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) conducted a 45-day public scoping period from July 30 to September 13, 2021 to solicit comments to inform the development of an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Humboldt Wind Energy Area (WEA), located approximately 21 miles offshore from the city of Eureka in Humboldt County, California. BOEM hosted two virtual public scoping meetings on August 24th to outline the planned environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to answer questions on the process, and to solicit public input on issues to be considered.

BOEM received 52 comments on 150 topics during the scoping period from members of the public, agencies, and other interested groups and stakeholders. This included written comments from 28 sources, 23 public meeting comments, and one phone call. Two comments were received after the close of the scoping period. BOEM acknowledges all comments received and will consider the information provided in the development of the EA.

Comments on Offshore Wind Leasing

Comments about BOEM lease areas included requests to move the area closer to metropolitan centers and other requests that the lease area be moved farther offshore.

Comments on the NEPA Process

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended that the EA compare and present impacts to resources against the existing conditions baseline using a consistent method to measure project impacts for all alternatives. Other commenters noted that development of a wind port also requires an inclusive, transparent, and deliberate process that considers long-term ramifications of industrializing an existing port.

Comments on Government-to-Government Consultation

The EPA recommended the EA address the existence of sacred sites in the project area that may be considered spiritual sites by regional tribal nations.

BOEM is conducting government-to-government consultations with interested Federally recognized tribes and partnering with the State of California to appropriately solicit comment and recommendations from other tribal and native groups.

Comments on Environmental Resources

Several comments expressed concerns about protection of avian and mammal species. Comments covered individual species analysis, collision, entanglement, and displacement.

The EPA requested BOEM address how climate change could potentially influence the project area; asked how implementation of the proposed project activities could lessen or potentially mitigate for these impacts; asked BOEM to include a list of all mitigation measures to be implemented as part of project activities; and requested the EA include a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions.

Comments on Commercial, Tribal, and Recreational Fishing

Commenters brought up possible use conflicts in the WEA and how these could impact fishing. Commenters requested meaningful participation and more involvement in the general offshore wind process. Groups and individual fishermen highlighted different impacts to the fishing industry and their livelihood. One commentor suggests that BOEM assist in finding other areas for the fishing industry to replace the economic loss from the Humboldt Wind Energy Area.

Comments Noted but Outside of the Scoping Process

Many commenters had concerns about turbine technologies, their interface with the environment, and the impact of wind towers on the viewshed of coastal areas. Other recommendations had general requests for further data acquisition relating to the seafloor, the benthic environment, economics, water quality, and other resources.